



Testimony to Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

March 2, 2023  
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Commenting on: **House Bill 6774, An Act Concerning Postsecondary Education**  
In Support of: **Senate Bill 1105, An Act Concerning the Percentage of Courses Taught by Part-Time Faculty at the Regional Community-Technical Colleges**

Good afternoon Senator Slap, Representative Haddad, and members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee. I am testifying about House Bill 6774, An Act Concerning Postsecondary Education and in support of Senate Bill 1105, An Act Concerning the Percentage of Courses Taught by Part-Time Faculty at the Regional Community-Technical Colleges.

I regret that I was not available to testify, since I had to be in the classroom. Thank you for allowing me to share my story.

I have taught in the CSU system since 2002, always on contingent contracts. I have cobbled together a fulltime schedule, by teaching at many colleges, as many as five in one semester, in order to earn enough money to support myself and my two children. I regularly teach more hours than is considered a fulltime teaching load. And I spend many unpaid hours preparing new classes and helping students who need help navigating college life.

I am asking you to look into finding a way to help people like me have health insurance. My main employer is the State of Connecticut and if you look at my W2 forms, I work fulltime. But since each contract is separate, I do not qualify for benefits and am paid at a lower rate than my fulltime colleagues.

This makes it very difficult to pay my bills. I have an extremely frugal lifestyle and still find it hard to pay for health insurance. My monthly insurance bill is \$1065. That works out to \$12,780 per year, not counting the increase during the summer when I have to go on COBRA. I cannot risk buying “cheaper” insurance, since I have a number of preexisting conditions and an insurance plan with a high deductible would drive me into bankruptcy. My health insurance costs eat up a large percentage of my annual pay.

During the summer, we have to switch to COBRA, which is more expensive, and which also leaves us in limbo for about six weeks, without an insurance card, while they inefficiently get our summer insurance contract processed.

Twice, I was also in limbo with no insurance at all for the month of January. Each time, my spring courses had been cancelled and then given back to me in late January, when it was too late to keep my regular insurance, but no COBRA contract had arrived yet. The inefficiency of this system is mind-boggling.

I also support the expansion of fulltime positions, with a pathway to fulltime employment for people like me, who have been de facto full time employees of the State of Connecticut for many years. I think that precedence should be given to job applicants who have ties to the CSU system, who either are currently or have in the past taught for the good state of Connecticut.

I would also like to be able to apply for unemployment benefits in the summer, when there are not enough courses to go around. I supplement my budget by pet sitting in the summer, but dog walking and such will not keep me from going into debt every summer. It takes me all fall and part of the spring to pay off my summer deficits and by then, the amount of money I can save to get through the lean times of summer is just not enough. The MIT cost of living calculator estimates that a household of my size living in Hartford County needs a pretax income around \$97,000, thanks to recent inflation. My income ranges from \$42,000 to \$62,000 and yet I am working more than fulltime hours to try to get by. When my seventeen-year-old car became too expensive to fix, my extended family helped me purchase a five-year-old car, so that I could get to work. I am grateful beyond words for their kindness. But I should be paid better for taking care of my students and teaching my classes and helping young people navigate a difficult economy, a pandemic, and the usual challenges of emerging adulthood.

Please consider studying the best practices we see elsewhere. Connecticut is a great state. But the way we invest in our next generation of workers is by investing in the people who teach them. So, please consider including a study of these plans in HB 6774 and move the bill forward.

Thank you,

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